United Nations S/2016/281

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 March 2016

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2227 (2015), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2016 and requested me to report every three months on the situation in Mali, focusing on progress in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and the efforts of MINUSMA to support it. It covers the period from 17 December 2015 to 18 March 2016.

II. Major political developments

2. While the reporting period was characterized by some progress in the implementation of the peace agreement, maintaining the new momentum that had emerged towards the end of 2015, significant challenges remained. The Government took steps to advance political and institutional reforms, decentralization and the cantonment and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The Government, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) and the Platform coalition of armed groups constructively participated in all deliberations of the Agreement Monitoring Committee and renewed their commitment to accelerating the implementation of the agreement. Those positive developments notwithstanding, the reporting period also saw continued delays in the implementation of key provisions of the agreement, such as the establishment of interim authorities in the north. This has been the priority of the signatory armed groups.

Implementation of the peace agreement: political and institutional measures

3. On 18 January, in Algiers, Algeria convened a high-level consultative meeting of the members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee to encourage the Malian parties to revive the peace process and implement the agreement without further delay. During that meeting, which was attended by the Government, the signatory armed groups and my new Special Representative for Mali and Head of MINUSMA, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the international mediation team agreed on

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the importance of moving forward with the implementation of the security provisions of the agreement, in particular cantonment and mixed patrols. The team strongly encouraged the Malian parties to also accelerate the implementation of other critical aspects of the agreement, especially matters relating to decentralization, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, national reconciliation and development in the north. The participants deplored the deterioration of the security situation and stressed the need to enhance communication among the parties on the implementation process. The Government was represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdoulaye Diop, who reported on the steps taken to advance the peace process, including meetings of the national committee for the coordination of the implementation of the peace agreement and measures taken towards the establishment of interim authorities. CMA and the Platform, which had expressed frustration at the slow pace of implementation of the agreement, circulated a document on its status, highlighting shortcomings in the Government's engagement. The signatory armed groups also expressed hesitation at the idea of proceeding with the cantonment process while progress on political and institutional reforms remained limited. They called for a balanced implementation of the provisions of the agreement.

4. Subsequently, the Government took further steps to accelerate the implementation of the institutional reforms envisaged in the agreement. On 19 January, it appointed governors for the regions of Ménaka (formerly part of the Gao region) and Taoudenni (formerly part of the Timbuktu region), which were created through legislation that had been passed in March 2012 but left unimplemented. CMA, the Platform and the traditional authorities of the two regions welcomed the nominations. The effective administration of the two regions still requires the appointment of local authorities, however. On 24 February, the Council of Ministers approved a bill to revise the Local Government Code of 2012 and a decree on the modalities for the implementation of the interim authorities, which remained pending ratification by the National Assembly.

5. On 25 January, under the auspices of the High Representative of the African Union for Mali and the Sahel, CMA and the Platform reached an agreement on representation in the Agreement Monitoring Committee, which had remained a point of contention since the signature of the peace agreement. They agreed to allocate both the Coalition du peuple de l'Azawad and the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques et de résistance II one additional seat each in the Committee and one seat each in one of the subcommittees of their choice under the umbrella of CMA.

6. From 19 to 26 February, the Government, CMA and the Platform met in Bamako with a view to accelerating the implementation of the peace agreement. After the conclusion of the tripartite consultations, the President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, chaired a meeting with CMA and the Platform on 27 February. The signatory parties announced in a joint statement following that meeting that they had agreed on an implementation timeline for March and April, focusing on the establishment of interim authorities for the north and progress in security conditions, cantonment and the expeditious implementation of the provisions of the agreement relating to the preparations for elections. They also committed themselves to holding a long-planned tripartite reconciliation meeting in Kidal from 27 to 30 March.

7. From 9 to 10 March, the Agreement Monitoring Committee held its seventh meeting, in Bamako. It welcomed the joint statement and the planned reconciliation meeting mentioned above. With regard to the latter, it called upon the parties to ensure a successful meeting and to make progress in national reconciliation, as envisaged in the peace agreement. However, it pointed to the absence of progress in taking forward several recommendations made at the previous meeting on the implementation of the agreement, such as the establishment of interim authorities in the north and the launch of mixed patrols by the Operational Coordination Mechanism, and urged the Malian parties to redouble their efforts to deliver results by the time of the next meeting, scheduled for April. The pending establishment of interim authorities remained a contentious issue between the Government and the signatory armed groups, with the latter insisting that they would not commit themselves to participating in the cantonment process unless the Government established the authorities. On the development front, the Committee approved the final report of the joint evaluation mission to the north, which will inform the development strategy for the north being prepared by the Government. It also approved the arrangement brokered on representation in the Committee referred to in paragraph 5 above.

8. CMA and the Platform also continued to address unresolved issues outside the formal mechanisms of the peace agreement and within the framework of bilateral arrangements. On 2 February, some 250 armed members of the Groupe d'autodéfense Touaregs imghads et alliés, part of the Platform coalition, entered the CMA stronghold of Kidal with a large number of vehicles. The Secretary-General of the group, Fahad Ag Almahmoud, argued that it had acted on the understandings reached in Anefis i-n-Darane with CMA in October 2015. CMA contested that assertion, alleging the lack of prior notification by the group of its movement. My Special Representative used his good offices to open communication channels among the Government, CMA, the Platform and the international mediation team to de-escalate tensions. On 6 February, CMA and the Platform issued a statement in which they agreed that the Platform would reduce its military presence in Kidal and be included in the administrative structure of the town. On 7 February, the Platform established a regional bureau in Kidal.

9. Progress was also made in identifying and registering 33 legislative texts, as required under the peace agreement, with MINUSMA support. On 9 February, the committee established by the Ministry of Territorial Administration in November 2015 to review the electoral legislation and the Charter of Political Parties submitted a report recommending, among other things, the establishment of a single electoral management body and direct universal suffrage for the election of territorial advisers. A subcommittee on institutional and political reforms is expected to review the electoral bill before its submission to the National Assembly in April.

10. The legislative by-elections held in Ansongo (Gao region) on 10 and 31 January revealed the security and political challenges facing future elections in the north. Voting was conducted in all six municipalities, except Talatayé. Beforehand, CMA wrote to the prefect of Ansongo to strongly voice its opposition to the holding of elections, owing to the lack of consultation. On 9 January, the Malian armed forces escorting the sub-prefect and electoral materials to Talatayé were met with a local protest, prompting the Government to cancel the elections there. On 28 January, CMA issued a press release in which it expressed support for

the local opposition to elections in Talatayé, stating that, in accordance with the peace agreement, no elections should be held before the establishment of the interim authorities. While the Mission facilitated dialogue between the Government and CMA to prevent an escalation of tensions, voting was not conducted in Talatayé.

11. On 31 December, the Council of Ministers adopted a new decree concerning the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, by which it increased the number of commissioners from 15 to 25 and created regional offices, regional consultative councils and five thematic subcommissions. The increase in the number of commissioners was aimed at addressing claims by CMA and the Platform that they were underrepresented in the Commission.

12. MINUSMA continued to support the Ministry of National Reconciliation and the national federation of women's organizations and trained 120 traditional, religious and other community leaders in Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu with a view to fostering a better understanding of the peace agreement. On 18 December, the President signed a decree providing for a 30 per cent quota for the appointment of women in national institutions and legislative bodies, following the adoption of the bill by the National Assembly during the previous reporting period. Notwithstanding the signing of the decree and the efforts of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and Families to promote the effective participation of women and young people in the implementation of the agreement, their involvement remained limited.

Other political developments

13. Since my previous report (S/2015/1030), owing to persistent security concerns, there has been little change in the number of government officials present at their duty stations in northern Mali, except for the deployment of a prefect to Ténenkou, in the Mopti region. The overall number of government officials absent from their duty stations at the sub-prefect level remained at some 49 per cent. In Gao, there was no increase in the number of sub-prefects deployed to the region (4 of 16). In Timbuktu, the number of sub-prefects stood at 13 of 31, given that 7 retired and others abandoned their duty stations in the light of security concerns. In Mopti, although all eight prefects were in place, security threats forced 20 of the 55 sub-prefects to work from their regional offices. No government official was deployed to Kidal. Some communities in the north, especially in Kidal, where traditional judges (cadis) are most prominent, expressed their preference for traditional justice mechanisms.

14. On 15 January, the President reshuffled the Cabinet, increasing the number of ministers from 31 to 32 and the number of women from five to six. It was the third reshuffle since the appointment of the current Prime Minister, Modibo Keita, in January 2015.

15. The international community devoted considerable attention to Mali and the peace process during the reporting period. The Security Council visited Mali, including Mopti and Timbuktu, from 4 to 7 March. On 12 February, during his visit to the country, the President of Germany announced the deployment of up to 650 soldiers to MINUSMA. On 19 February, also in the context of a visit to Mali, the Prime Minister of France expressed continuing support for the peace process and

indicated his country's willingness to maintain the presence of French forces in order to sustain counter-terrorism efforts.

Regional cooperation in the Sahel

16. Following the deadly terrorist attacks in the capitals of Mali and Burkina Faso on 20 November and 15 January, respectively, the Heads of State of the Group of Five for the Sahel met on 31 January on the margins of the twenty-sixth ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in Addis Ababa, to discuss joint efforts to tackle common security threats, such as terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, radicalization and violent extremism. On 4 March, during a meeting in N'Djamena, the ministers of defence of the Group of Five for the Sahel discussed military, security and intelligence mechanisms to tackle the threat of terrorism. The creation of a specialized rapid reaction force was also considered.

III. Major security developments

17. While some steps were taken in the implementation of key defence and security provisions of the peace agreement, including beginning the construction of three cantonment sites, the security situation did not improve, even in the absence of fighting among the signatories. The Malian defence and security forces, the French forces and MINUSMA remained the primary targets of attacks by extremist and terrorist groups. Notwithstanding several intercommunal agreements mentioned in my previous report, long-standing tensions continued, especially in Ménaka. The MINUSMA force continued to face difficulties in allocating adequate resources to implement mandated tasks owing to the need to escort convoys and protect cantonment sites in the light of the prevailing security situation.

Asymmetric and extremist attacks

18. Extremist and terrorist groups maintained their determination to undermine the peace process, increasingly targeting its supporters, including the signatory parties, civilians, civil servants and the international presences in the central and northern regions. Threats and intimidation campaigns against civilians by the Front de libération du Macina and Ansar Eddine in Mopti, in addition to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb in Timbuktu, intensified, including, increasingly, through targeted attacks. For example, on 17 December, armed assailants shot and killed three civilians — a journalist, a student and a MINUSMA local contractor — in front of a local radio station in Timbuktu. On 24 January, a member of the National Guard thwarted an attack by two armed men against the residence of the newly arrived prosecutor in Gao. Three instances of beheadings of presumed informants working for the Malian armed forces reportedly took place in the Mopti region.

19. Violent extremist and terrorist groups operated in the northern and central parts of the country and across borders. The Front de libération du Macina continued to threaten Mopti, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb retained its foothold in Timbuktu and Ansar Eddine continued to operate in Kidal. There was evidence of increasing cooperation among the extremist and terrorist groups in Mali and across the Sahel. The attack of 15 January in Ouagadougou, where armed assailants

attacked a hotel with a modus operandi similar to the attack of 20 November against a hotel in Bamako, was reportedly perpetrated by three Malians. The abduction of a foreigner in Timbuktu on 7 January and two other foreigners from Burkina Faso on 15 January, for which Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb claimed responsibility, signalled a potential increase in the targeting of foreigners in the band stretching across central and northern Mali, Burkina Faso and the Niger.

20. During the reporting period, MINUSMA recorded 20 violent extremist and terrorist attacks against it, compared with 25 during the previous reporting period. Those hostile acts left seven peacekeepers, one civilian staff member and two civilian contractors dead, compared with two peacekeepers, one civilian staff member and one civilian contractor during the previous reporting period. The attacks were increasingly sophisticated, using rockets and mortars, roadside explosive devices and suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices. One of the deadliest attacks occurred on 12 February, when unidentified assailants launched a complex attack against the camp in Kidal. It began with mortar fire on the northern part of the camp, while a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device breached the south gate, killing 7 peacekeepers and wounding 53 others. The attack was reportedly claimed by both Al Mourabitoun and Ansar Eddine. The reporting period also saw 19 attacks against the Malian armed forces and 2 against the French forces, resulting in 17 fatalities for the former.

21. The Malian defence and security forces, the French forces and MINUSMA, within their respective capacities and mandates, continued to support the creation of a secure environment in northern Mali. Under separate lines of command, MINUSMA conducted coordinated patrols with the Malian armed forces, while also continuing its coordination with French forces.

22. The Malian armed forces conducted three counter-terrorism operations in the Mopti and Ségou regions, resulting in the arrests of at least 13 suspected terrorists, the majority of whom were from the Fulani community. Between 13 December and 16 January, the armed forces of Burkina Faso and Mali carried out joint cross-border counter-terrorism operations. On 29 February, the French and Malian forces launched a one-month counter-terrorism operation in the Timbuktu region. Following an increase in crime in the region since the end of December, the Malian armed forces established checkpoints in Timbuktu, while CMA and the Platform were in discussion with the Malian armed forces to begin joint patrols outside the town.

23. The Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), part of CMA, increasingly became a target of extremist and terrorist groups during the reporting period. On 24 December, Ansar Eddine attacked the MNLA-controlled locality of Talhandak, near the Algerian border in the Kidal region, killing at least 11 MNLA combatants. Another four combatants, including Balla Ag Cherif, the younger brother of the MNLA leader, Bilal Ag Cherif, were killed in an ambush of a convoy sent in response to that attack. MNLA accused the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad, whose combatants formerly fought with Ansar Eddine, of not supporting efforts to combat terrorists.

24. MINUSMA continued to provide capacity-building assistance to the Malian defence and security forces. Its police officers provided technical assistance to a specialized unit of the national police and gendarmerie investigating the attack of 20 November. Together with the United Nations Development Programme and the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, MINUSMA supported the Malian authorities in operationalizing a specialized judicial unit on terrorism and transnational organized crime. On 31 December, the Malian authorities adopted three decrees filling key posts of magistrates throughout Mali, including two substitute prosecutors to augment the capacity of the unit. The United Nations Mine Action Service trained more than 40 officers of the Malian defence and security forces in explosive ordnance disposal, improvised explosive device threat mitigation and weapon and ammunition management.

Ceasefire monitoring

25. As at 18 March, all 40 MINUSMA military observers had been deployed, 32 of whom to the north, where they conducted 212 patrols and established contacts with the military leadership of the signatory armed groups to monitor the local ceasefire arrangements between CMA and the Platform. They also conducted four joint investigations with the mixed monitoring and verification teams on potential ceasefire violations, finding no evidence of violations. At its meeting on 18 and 19 February, the Technical Commission on Security discussed a report of the mixed teams on the alleged ceasefire violation committed by the Malian armed forces in Zinzin, in the Timbukutu region, on 15 January; it concluded that the allegation could not be substantiated.

Implementation of the peace agreement: defence and security measures

26. Progress was made on some defence and security measures of the peace agreement during the period under review. On 29 December, with funds from the Peacebuilding Fund, the construction of two cantonment sites began in Likrakar (Timbuktu region) and Fafa (Gao region), thereby providing employment to local young people. The construction of the site at I-n-Eggar (Gao region) began on 26 January, following the clearance of potential explosives by the United Nations Mine Action Service. The Technical Commission on Security technically assessed 18 of the 24 cantonment sites proposed by CMA and the Platform, validating 17. During its meeting on 18 and 19 February, it gave the go-ahead for construction to begin on the five remaining sites (four proposed by CMA and one by the Platform). The Government also reported on its programme to provide rations to 14,400 combatants and fuel in the pre-cantonment phase; it provided the in-kind contribution to the CMA and Platform combatants for February. CMA and the Platform were requested to submit the lists of combatants and an inventory of their armaments, a prerequisite for the launch of the cantonment process.

27. At the time of writing, the Operational Coordination Mechanism, responsible for establishing the mixed patrols and protecting the cantonment sites, was yet to begin work. At its meeting on 18 and 19 February, the Technical Commission on Security requested CMA and the Platform to provide a list of participants for the first mixed patrols to be conducted in the Gao region. The Government announced that it had procured 32 vehicles for the patrols. It also agreed to provide an allowance for food and operational costs to the CMA and Platform representatives participating in the Mechanism, while MINUSMA provided funds to secure some of

the office equipment and furniture needed for the Mechanism to be made operational. The MINUSMA force protected United Nations personnel present at the cantonment sites under construction.

28. On 31 December, the President signed decrees establishing national commissions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on integration. MINUSMA supported the Government to expedite the appointment of the members of the two commissions and to finalize the revision of legislation governing the National Council for Security Sector Reform, which are critical to advancing the cantonment process. MINUSMA, in collaboration with the World Bank, continued to support the Malian authorities in drafting a national programme document for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Government continued its efforts to strengthen democratic oversight of the security sector and, in that context, held a workshop supported by MINUSMA on 8 and 9 March to discuss the oversight role of the National Assembly and the development of a triennial strategic plan for 2016-2019 and an action plan for 2016 in support of the Assembly. The Mission also supported the Malian authorities in implementing the military programming law, the formulation of defence and security policies and the revision of the national strategy on border management.

Protection of civilians

29. Armed banditry constituted the most significant threat to civilians, accounting for 45 per cent of all incidents in Timbuktu and 25 per cent in Gao and Mopti. As mentioned above, threats and intimidation by extremist and terrorist groups targeting civilians, including civil servants and informants of the Malian armed forces, increased in the central and northern regions. Nevertheless, MINUSMA police personnel conducted 2,479 joint patrols with the Malian police in urban areas. In addition, the MINUSMA force adopted a robust and visible posture by increasing the frequency of its long-range patrols in the vicinity of Ansongo (Gao region), Gao, Kidal and Ménaka and using its aviation assets and unmanned aerial vehicles to monitor remote areas and discourage violence. In the Timbuktu region, MINUSMA conducted an average of four reconnaissance flights per week over Ber, Goundam and Gourma Rharous to monitor the movements of armed groups and reassure the population. On 10 March, the Mission launched a 10-day combined air and ground operation in the Mopti and Timbuktu regions to protect civilians and deter extremist and terrorist groups from poaching elephants.

30. Intercommunal conflict persisted in the Ménaka and Timbuktu regions. The series of clashes between the Daoussak and the Ibogaletane communities, as well as between the Daoussak and the Fulani communities, reported since 16 February in the Ménaka region left more than 20 people dead and some 2,280 displaced. On 20 February, members of the Daoussak community attacked a camp of the Ibogaletane community near Inékar, 45 km west of Ménaka, reportedly killing six members of that community and kidnapping two others. On 22 February, the Malian armed forces deployed to Inékar to de-escalate tensions and to enable access for humanitarian organizations to provide assistance to the population. Local reconciliation meetings in Inékar were cancelled following renewed fighting between the Daoussak and the Ibogaletane communities and between the Daoussak and the Fulani communities from 25 to 29 February. On 29 February, CMA and the Platform established a joint commission to ease the intercommunal tensions in the

region. The risk of escalation of those community conflicts remained high in an environment characterized by the proliferation of weapons, illicit drug trafficking and the presence of armed groups, as well as extremist and terrorist groups with links to various communities. On 20 January, an unknown number of members of the Daoussak community reportedly entered the Niger and attacked a Fulani camp 18 km north of Bani Bangou and a location 32 km south of the border with Mali, allegedly killing seven individuals and injuring three. Further to accounts of violent clashes in my previous report between members of two Tuareg communities, the Daoussak and the Imghad in the Ménaka area, the leaders of both communities issued a joint statement in Bamako on 9 March in which they announced that an agreement to end hostilities had been reached.

IV. Human rights

31. The human rights situation remained of serious concern during the reporting period. MINUSMA documented human rights violations and abuses committed by the Malian defence and security forces, CMA, the Platform, other armed groups, violent extremist and terrorist groups and international forces. A total of 34 cases of human rights violations and abuses, involving at least 53 victims, were reported, mostly in the Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu regions, compared with 25 cases and 157 victims in my previous report. The cases involved 17 instances of killing, summary execution and enforced disappearance, 12 instances of ill-treatment, 2 instances of a death threat and 1 instance of illegal detention.

32. As at 18 March, MINUSMA had identified 265 conflict- and terrorism-related detainees, including 4 boys and 72 individuals newly arrested, held in State-run detention facilities throughout the country. Of those, 124 had been arrested after the signing of the peace agreement in June 2015 for their alleged involvement in terrorism-related activities. In February, CMA freed six members of the Malian defence and security forces, while the Government released nine individuals, including a boy and four men, associated with CMA. CMA continued to detain six Platform combatants, while the Platform continued to detain a CMA combatant. In the context of the counter-terrorism operations mentioned above, MINUSMA documented that 6 of 13 persons arrested had been subjected to ill-treatment by the Malian armed forces.

33. Progress in combating impunity remained slow. Major impediments to criminal proceedings included the lack of logistical resources for magistrates, insecurity preventing the judicial authorities from effectively carrying out investigations, especially in the north, and the unconditional release of some detainees. In a positive development, the Bamako Appeals Court issued an order on 22 December to refer General Amadou Haya Sanogo and all the other suspects or suspected accomplices for trial. The trial date is pending.

34. On 12 February, as a result of MINUSMA advocacy, CMA signed a declaration in which it committed itself to abiding by international standards and to respecting the international ban on the recruitment and involvement of children in armed forces and armed groups.

35. No new cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported to MINUSMA. Continuing security threats combined with sociocultural inhibitions and fear of reprisals may have hindered the monitoring and reporting of new cases. The Malian

judiciary investigated conflict-related sexual violence committed in 2012. A total of 19 women were heard by an investigating judge in Bamako, with support from the MINUSMA trust fund for the protection of victims, witnesses and their rights, which provides safety measures for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. On 26 January, 45 parliamentarians and members of civil society engaged in advocacy with the National Assembly for the adoption of a law strengthening efforts to combat gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.

36. On 22 December, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights released joint reports, with MINUSMA, on the attack in Kidal in May 2014 and on the main findings of the attack on Tin Hama, Gao region, in May 2015. The human rights violations and abuses documented during those attacks may amount to war crimes. While calling for the prosecution of the perpetrators of those crimes, MINUSMA and the Office stressed the need for the parties to comply with their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law and to take measures to strengthen the protection of civilians. The Mission's continuous advocacy notwithstanding, the Malian judicial authorities did not initiate criminal proceedings in relation to those human rights violations and abuses during the reporting period.

V. Humanitarian situation

37. The overall trend of schools reopening in the north notwithstanding, 12 per cent of preschool, elementary and junior high schools remained closed in the Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu regions, with 380,000 children between 7 and 15 years of age in the north remaining out of school. In Kidal, 3,811 children in the 21 open schools received education from 76 volunteer and 8 paid teachers (of the 370 required for the 62 schools in Kidal). The deteriorating security situation in some parts of the Mopti region led to 8 per cent of schools being closed, increasing the number from 84 to 117. In the Ségou region, 20 primary and junior high schools were temporarily closed in the light of the worsening security situation. The World Food Programme (WFP) provided school meals to 155,094 children, half of whom were girls, in primary schools in the Gao, Kayes, Koulikoro, Mopti and Timbuktu regions. In February, WFP again began to provide meal assistance to 11 primary schools in Kidal. The United Nations Children's Fund provided school materials and training to educators in 16 schools and 44 accelerated learning centres in Kidal.

38. Access to basic services remained a challenge in northern Mali. The number of functioning health facilities remained limited, with only 10 of 26 open in Kidal. The World Health Organization restored 186 of 203 health facilities in the Gao, Mopti and Timbuktu regions. The lack of investment in public infrastructure, such as wells and generators, continued to constrain access to water and electricity. Food insecurity was affecting 2.5 million of 17 million people, of whom 315,000 were expected to face severe food insecurity during the lean season. In that context, WFP provided food assistance to more than 350,000 people in the north every month and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provided agriculture and pastoral tools and kits to in excess of 26,000 households.

39. As at 18 March, there were some 52,000 internally displaced persons in Mali and 143,300 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger. The Gao and Timbuktu regions continued to have the highest proportion of internally

displaced persons. A total of 23 per cent of Malian refugees residing in neighbouring countries originated from the Ménaka region. On 1 January, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees opened an office in Ménaka. On 17 January, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs deployed a national liaison officer to Kidal to facilitate humanitarian coordination in the region. The Kidal airstrip reopened on 29 January.

40. The United Nations Mine Action Service continued to educate conflict-affected communities in central and northern Mali about explosive hazards, reaching some 13,700 beneficiaries, and destroyed 32 explosive remnants of war and 37 rounds of small arms ammunition.

VI. Economic development, cultural preservation and the environment

41. There was little progress in the delivery of peace dividends and the return of basic services to the north by the Government. The finalization of its development strategy for the northern regions, including a national emergency response plan, remained pending. Government-led development initiatives were constrained by the prevalence of insecurity, the lack of basic infrastructure and the limited redeployment of government officials to the north.

42. In support of the Government, MINUSMA implemented quick-impact projects in areas such as the rehabilitation and equipping of government facilities in the northern regions. It also used quick-impact projects and the Trust Fund in Support of Peace and Security in Mali, among other resources, to deliver much-needed basic services directly to the population in the north. Furthermore, the Mission contributed to expanding access to potable water in rural areas of the Gao, Kidal, Mopti and Timbuktu regions, distributed solar-powered electricity kits to improve physical security and living conditions in Kidal and provided school materials and equipment to schools in Timbuktu.

43. In addition to the efforts made by humanitarian actors described above, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes made significant contributions to bridge the service delivery gap in the northern regions, notwithstanding the limited access stemming from persistent insecurity. During the reporting period, the Peacebuilding Fund reached a disbursement of some 75 per cent of its total allocation of $10.9 million for the period 2015/16. Its financing enabled the resumption of education activities through the opening of 150 education centres for 4,500 children, with 105 educators. The Fund also financed income-generating activities for an estimated 300 women and young people, in addition to supporting intercommunal dialogue in the Gao and Timbuktu regions.

44. MINUSMA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization undertook various heritage-related initiatives. On 4 February, a consecration ceremony, last held in the eleventh century, was conducted by local communities to mark the reconstruction of 14 of 16 World Heritage mausoleums in Timbuktu destroyed during the conflict.

45. MINUSMA continued to take measures to mitigate its environmental impact in Mali. On 1 January, it adopted new waste management measures to enforce requirements on waste segregation, recycling and volume reduction, in accordance

with the provisions of the environmental policy of the Department of Field Support and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for United Nations field missions.

VII. Deployment and capacities of the Mission

Military

46. As at 18 March, the strength of the military component of MINUSMA stood at 10,698 personnel, of an authorized strength of 11,240, representing 95 per cent of authorized military personnel. Women accounted for 1.7 per cent of the force. Key outstanding capabilities included a combat convoy battalion, a force protection company, an attack helicopter unit and a medium military helicopter unit with tactical night-flight capabilities. In addition, MINUSMA remained seriously underresourced in terms of armoured personnel carriers, with 91 required to reach the originally planned levels and 43 others in need of replacement, meaning that 134 such vehicles are needed to reach the total of 324 assessed as required by the force. MINUSMA also continued to require additional military staff officers with sufficient experience and skills for their duties and responsibilities, in particular for intelligence and imagery analysis. Concerns over the operational capability of some infantry units remained owing to the lack of sufficient items of contingent-owned equipment and self-sustainment capabilities (11 contingents are below 60 per cent of requirements) that meet United Nations standards. The support of bilateral partners is also required in such areas as maintenance of armoured personnel carriers, capacity-building for minor engineering works, logistics support and training to improve the asymmetric warfare capabilities of the contingents.

Police

47. As at 18 March, the strength of the police component of MINUSMA stood at 1,116 personnel, representing 78 per cent of its authorized strength of 1,440, with 84 per cent of individual police officers (11 per cent of them women) and 76 per cent of formed police unit personnel (5 per cent of them women) deployed. The deployment of the remaining two formed police units, to Gao and Goundam (Timbuktu region), in addition to a special weapons and tactics capacity, is under way. MINUSMA continued to require a small police riverine capacity and additional specialized police personnel, including experts in forensics, improvised explosive devices, intelligence, transnational organized crime, trafficking of illicit drugs, small arms and light weapons, counter-terrorism teams and project managers.

Civilian personnel

48. As at 18 March, 88 per cent of all MINUSMA civilian staff had been deployed, comprising 86 per cent of international staff, 88 per cent of United Nations volunteers and 89 per cent of national staff. Women held 30 per cent of international posts, 32 per cent of United Nations Volunteer positions and 21 per cent of national posts. Civilian staff had been deployed in Bamako (926), Gao (191), Kidal (88), Mopti (98), Tessalit (19) and Timbuktu (138), as well as in Abidjan (38).

Efforts to secure supply lines

49. The MINUSMA force continued its efforts to secure the main supply routes by conducting 26 escorted logistics convoy missions with the support of aviation assets, unmanned aerial vehicles and special forces. Those efforts were essential for the construction of MINUSMA camps, the reopening of the Kidal airfield and the sustainment of the Mission in the regions. A backlog of containers for engineering materials continued to accumulate in Gao, however. The lack of a combat convoy battalion, the required armoured personnel carriers and mine-protected vehicles restricted the Mission's capability to conduct escort missions in non-permissive environments and limited the number of logistics convoys in northern Mali, negatively affecting fuel and rations delivery and construction efforts. It also increased the cost of resupplying MINUSMA personnel in the field, given that fuel and rations had to be airlifted to Aguelhok, Kidal and Tessalit in the Kidal region. The continued requirements for the MINUSMA force to heavily invest in force protection measures, including providing convoy escorts and protecting cantonment sites, seriously hampered the Mission's capacity to implement mandated tasks, notwithstanding the constant reprioritization of tasks.

50. No new camps were completed during the reporting period. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of the infrastructure destroyed in the Kidal camp in the attack of 12 February continued. In Bamako, the construction of a facility for the MINUSMA operational base by the airport continued, while alternative premises were secured in the city to accommodate the Mission's headquarters. The relocation of MINUSMA personnel from the Hotel l'Amitié should be completed by the middle of May.

VIII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

51. United Nations personnel continued to face a high level of security threats, with the Mission continuing its efforts to enhance its security measures in the north. The Kidal camp security project to install detection systems, including a tethered balloon, a Doppler radar system and enhanced high-performance binoculars, should reach full operational capacity in the middle of April. The surveillance systems remained partially operational after the provisional repair of the damage caused in the attack on the camp of 12 February, which included the perforation of the aerostat by shrapnel and the destruction of relevant ground infrastructure, including weather stations. The ground alert system designed to detect incoming fire was yet to be made operational.

52. MINUSMA also took steps to increase preventive measures. The United Nations Mine Action Service delivered predeployment training and equipment to explosive ordnance device military contingents and provided infantry battalions with search and detection training and equipment for identifying explosive threats. The use of armoured personnel carriers by the MINUSMA force and police to pass through high-risk areas resulted in a dramatic decrease in casualties.

53. In the light of the deteriorating security situation and the elevated level of security threats against United Nations personnel, a joint strategic security review was undertaken from 19 to 25 January to identify systemic prevention, mitigation and response measures. The recommendations highlighted the urgency of advancing

security sector reform and implementing the security provisions of the peace agreement as a key factor for the security of United Nations personnel and reiterated the Mission's acute need for key capabilities, such as armoured personnel carriers and enhanced medical evacuation capabilities. The recommendations are being taken into account in the strategic review on MINUSMA, which will conclude in May. As recommended, MINUSMA is adjusting its security plans, coordination mechanisms and training programme, in addition to developing additional tactical intervention capacity and contingency plans.

IX. Conduct and discipline

54. During the reporting period, no allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse was made. For the allegation of sexual abuse made during the previous reporting period, the Member State concerned conducted an investigation in Mali and concluded that it could not be substantiated. MINUSMA and its partners provided medical support to the alleged victim. The Mission continued to inform the public about the expected standards of conduct for United Nations personnel, focusing on the commitment to implement the policy of zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse within the Mission. MINUSMA reached out to partners, including religious leaders, law enforcement authorities and local and international non-governmental organizations, stressing the importance of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and reporting such cases.

X. Observations

55. Mali has negotiated a long and difficult road over the past year with considerable successes, culminating in the signing of the peace agreement in 2015 and the rapprochement between the signatory armed groups. I am encouraged to see that the signatories have refrained from resorting to violence and remain committed to resolving differences through discussions. I commend all the Malian parties for constructively participating in the Agreement Monitoring Committee and demonstrating gestures of political will to advance the peace process in the best interest of the people. In particular, I commend the efforts by the Government to implement political and institutional reforms and decentralization, which have been the priority demand of the signatory armed groups.

56. I remain concerned, however, that actual progress in the implementation of the peace agreement remains limited. The high-level consultative ministerial meeting held in Algiers on 18 January offered an opportunity for the members of the international mediation team to impress on the parties the need to accelerate the implementation process. The Security Council, while visiting Mali from 4 to 7 March, also emphasized the importance of an expeditious implementation and the key role that the Government must play to tackle the political and security challenges. To ensure that the Malian people enjoy the dividends of peace, security, human rights and development that they deserve, more needs to be done to bring tangible progress without further delay. The parties must adhere to article 50 of the agreement, in which they recognized that the most important element in making the agreement a success was their sincerity and good faith and their commitment to accept the content of the agreement and to work to implement all its provisions. I

urge all the Malian parties to accelerate the implementation of the agreement in full, especially the political and security provisions that underpin the successful execution of all other provisions. The Government's leadership in making progress on those provisions will be critical.

57. To sustain the positive steps achieved since the consultations in Algiers, there must be inclusive and transparent consultations with all stakeholders concerned. I call upon the signatory parties to include women and young people in all key implementation mechanisms of the agreement and in the national reconciliation conference planned for later in 2016. The adoption by the Government of a decree providing for a 30 per cent quota for the appointment of women in national institutions and legislative bodies was a welcome development. In the same vein, I encourage CMA and the Platform to continue constructive consultations in the framework of the talks held in Anefis i-n-Darane. The tensions resulting from the Platform's entry into Kidal on 2 February highlight a need to ensure that parallel bilateral agreements are clearly linked to the overall framework of the peace agreement, so as to facilitate progress in implementation and contribute to the resolution of intercommunal conflicts.

58. I welcome the efforts of the Technical Commission on Security to implement security arrangements, in particular the launch of the construction of cantonment sites and the monitoring and verification of ceasefire violations through the mixed monitoring and verification teams. The Commission remains an important mechanism to facilitate the implementation of key defence and security provisions of the agreement. I call upon all parties to fully cooperate with its work, to expedite the establishment of the Operational Coordination Mechanism and to provide the lists of participants in the mixed patrols and the cantonment process. In the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, I stress that the Government must ensure the protection of women and children who are victims of the conflict. In that regard, I call upon the Government to appoint the representatives of the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and Families to the national commissions on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on integration.

59. The improved relationship among the signatories notwithstanding, the northern and central parts of Mali remain threatened by criminal, violent extremist and terrorist groups, which take advantage of the limited presence of law enforcement institutions. The spread of insecurity and the security threat posed by actors outside the peace process remain alarming, as demonstrated by the attack against the MINUSMA camp in Kidal on 12 February, which was claimed by Al Mourabitoun and Ansar Eddine. I strongly condemn the attacks by violent extremist and terrorist groups against civilians, signatory armed groups, the Malian and French forces and MINUSMA, which remain the target of asymmetric and increasingly sophisticated attacks. I reiterate that attacks targeting United Nations peacekeepers constitute war crimes under international law and I call for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. I also express my most heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and the Governments of those concerned, as well as to the people and the Government of Mali who continue to suffer unconscionable losses.

60. The persistent operational difficulties faced by the MINUSMA force, coupled with the current environment marked by insecurity, drug trafficking and terrorism, will continue to pose significant security challenges to the Mission. I encourage all troop-contributing countries, police-contributing countries and bilateral donors to

sustain their efforts to ensure that all contingents have equipment and training that meet United Nations standards. I urge the rapid deployment of the outstanding armoured personnel carriers and the priority military and police capabilities outlined herein and in my previous report. Bearing in mind the challenges encountered, the Secretariat has engaged with troop- and police-contributing countries to identify practical steps to reach the required standards. I call upon Member States that are in a position to do so to support the troop-contributing countries.

61. The successful stabilization of Mali ultimately depends on the Government, which must step up its efforts, including by making progress on the revision of the 2014 strategy for security sector reform to ensure the participation of CMA and the Platform and by enhancing regional security cooperation. Given the transborder nature of the security challenges, I reiterate the need for the Government to enhance the presence of the Malian armed forces in the north and to create a more conducive environment for the overall peace process and for MINUSMA. I commend the West African region on its strong engagement in supporting the Government in its efforts to combat violent extremism and MINUSMA in its efforts to implement its mandate in such a volatile security environment. The United Nations stands ready to support regional security cooperation mechanisms, including the planned assessment visit to Mali by the African Union in the context of proposals for a regional intervention force. I encourage further collaboration by the countries of the subregion to reinforce collaboration with the Government and MINUSMA on issues relating to border security and intelligence sharing, as well as through the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. I also commend the efforts of the Group of Five for the Sahel to support those endeavours.

62. I am concerned by the increase in human rights violations and abuses documented by MINUSMA, in addition to the slow progress in combating impunity. There can be no sustainable solution to the conflict in Mali without accountability. I call upon the Malian authorities to swiftly conduct criminal proceedings and bring the perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses to justice. I urge the Government to hold itself to the highest standards of due process and abide by its international human rights obligations in the conduct of its counter-terrorism operations in central and northern Mali. I welcome the progress made in the functioning of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. I encourage the Malian parties to ensure that the appointment of the additional commissioners will not result in the politicization of the Commission and the undermining of its credibility.

63. The return of basic services and the establishment of income-generating activities in central and northern regions remain critical to addressing the continuing humanitarian concerns and unemployment among young people and former combatants, who are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment by violent actors. I strongly encourage the Government to sustain its efforts to expand the coverage of basic social services in the central and northern regions to ensure that conflict-affected communities benefit from the long-awaited dividends of peace. I also call upon the Government to make progress on the development strategy for the north, presented at the international conference for the economic recovery and development of Mali held in Paris on 22 October 2015, in addition to the sustainable development fund to which it pledged to contribute 450 million euros over the period from 2016 to 2018.

64. Lastly, I wish to express my full support for my new Special Representative for Mali and Head of MINUSMA, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, who has demonstrated an indefatigable dynamism, affinity for working productively with all the partners to the peace process and commitment to United Nations personnel working in a challenging environment. I commend the members of the international mediation team for their sustained support for the Malian parties. I also pay special tribute to the men and women of MINUSMA and the troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries for their dedication and contribution to the Mission. I also express my gratitude to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and bilateral partners, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, non-governmental organizations and all other partners, many of which have been operating under difficult conditions and facing grave threats in a hostile environment, for their contribution in support of peace and stability in Mali.

Annex

Military and police strength of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali as at 15 March 2016

	Military component (staff officers and units)			*Police component*								
				Individual police officers			*Formed police units*			*Total police*		
Country	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*	*Men*	*Women*	*Total*
Albania												
Algeria												
Argentina												
Armenia												
Australia												
Austria												
Bangladesh	1 466		1 466				140		140	140		140
Belgium	7		7									
Benin	259		259	29	1	30	140		140	169	1	170
Bhutan	3		3									
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)												
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2		2									
Botswana												
Brazil												
Brunei Darussalam												
Bulgaria												
Burkina Faso	1 692	29	1 721	21	2	23				21	2	23
Burundi				13		13				13		13
Cambodia	289	13	302									
Cameroon	2		2	20		20				20		20
Canada												
Central African Republic												
Chad	1 447		1 447	4		4				4		4
Chile												
China	387	15	402									
Colombia												
Congo												
Côte d'Ivoire												
Croatia												
Cyprus												
Czech Republic	1		1									

	Military component (staff officers and units)			Police component								
				Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
Country	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Democratic Republic of the Congo				5	1	6				5	1	6
Denmark	18	1	19									
Djibouti				1		1				1		1
Dominica												
Dominican Republic												
Ecuador												
Egypt	68		68									
El Salvador	88	4	92									
Estonia	1		1									
Ethiopia												
Fiji												
Finland	4		4									
France	29		29	9		9				9		9
Gabon												
Gambia	4		4									
Germany	18		18	16	3	19				16	3	19
Ghana	218		218									
Greece												
Grenada												
Guatemala												
Guinea	848	6	854	3		3				3		3
Guinea-Bissau	1		1									
Honduras												
Hungary												
Iceland												
India												
Indonesia	142	4	146									
Ireland												
Israel												
Italy	2		2									
Jamaica												
Japan												
Jordan	1		1	2		2				2		2
Kazakhstan												
Kenya	3	4	7									
Kyrgyzstan												
Latvia	1		1									

	Military component (staff officers and units)			Police component								
				Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
Country	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Lesotho												
Liberia	47	2	49									
Libya												
Lithuania												
Luxembourg												
Madagascar				2		2				2		2
Malawi												
Malaysia												
Mauritania												
Mongolia												
Montenegro												
Morocco												
Mozambique												
Namibia												
Nepal	146	4	150									
Netherlands	461	30	491	18	5	23				18	5	23
New Zealand												
Niger	858	6	864	12		12				12		12
Nigeria	76	13	89	2		2	109	31	140	111	31	142
Norway	71	9	80									
Pakistan												
Palau												
Papua New Guinea												
Paraguay												
Peru												
Philippines												
Poland												
Portugal	2		2									
Qatar												
Republic of Korea												
Republic of Moldova												
Romania	1		1	2		2				2		2
Russian Federation												
Rwanda												
Samoa												
Senegal	666	10	676	16	2	18	276	4	280	292	6	298
Serbia												
Sierra Leone	7	1	8									

	Military component (staff officers and units)			Police component								
				Individual police officers			Formed police units			Total police		
Country	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Singapore												
Slovakia												
Slovenia												
South Africa												
Spain												
Sri Lanka												
Sweden	202	21	223	2	3	5				2	3	5
Switzerland	4		4	3		3				3		3
Tajikistan												
Thailand												
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia												
Timor-Leste												
Togo	920	15	935	3		3	134	6	140	137	6	143
Tunisia				46	1	47				46	1	47
Turkey				1		1				1		1
Uganda												
Ukraine												
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1	1	2									
United Republic of Tanzania												
United States of America	10		10									
Uruguay												
Vanuatu												
Yemen	7		7	9		9				9		9
Zambia												
Zimbabwe												
Total	**10 496**	**188**	**10 684**	**239**	**18**	**257**	**799**	**41**	**840**	**1 038**	**59**	**1 097**

MINUSMA
Deployment
as at 15 March 2016
National capital
Regional capital
Town, village
Major airport
International boundary
Regional boundary
Sector line
Main road
Other road
Track
Railroad
Sector WEST
Sector NORTH
Sector EAST
ALGERIA
MAURITANIA
NIGER
NIGERIA
BURKINA FASO
GHANA
TOGO
BENIN
SENEGAL
GUINEA
GUINEA-BISSAU
SIERRA LEONE
COTE D'IVOIRE
MALI
Bamako
Kayes
Mopti / Sevare
Gao
Kidal
Tessalit
Tombouctou
Douentza
Nampala
Dyabali
Nioro du Sahel
Aourou
Diéma
Kita
Kati
Koulikoro
Ségou
Djenné
Niono
Koutiala
Sikasso
Bougouni
Yanfolila
Kolondiéba
Kankan
Ouagadougou
Ansongo
Ménaka
Bourem
Goundam
Léré
Koro
Tambacounda
Bafoulabé
Aguelhok
Anefis
Ber
Goa
Gossi
Ayoûnel 'Atroûs
Nioro du Sahel
Map No. 4508 Rev. 13 UNITED NATIONS
March 2016
Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)